

Air Canada suspends US, international routes and lays off 1,500

February 9 2021

Air Canada announced Tuesday the suspension of 17 US and international routes until the end of April and layoffs of 1,500 workers, citing a drop in demand for travel after a tightening of public health restrictions to slow the spread of new COVID-19 variants.

The cancellations to be phased in over the coming days will affect flights between Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Boston, New York, Seattle and Washington as well as Bogota, Sao Paulo, Dublin, Dubai, Tel-Aviv, London, Hong Kong and Narita.

Canada's flagship airline said in a statement it will "also temporarily reduce its unionized workforce by 1,500 employees and an as yet undetermined number of managers."

The decision is another blow to employees of Air Canada, which has slashed more than half its workforce—or about 20,000 jobs—since the start of the pandemic, including 1,900 in January.

Three other Canadian airlines last month also suspended flights, at Ottawa's behest, to sunbelt destinations in the Caribbean and Mexico to curb winter vacationing abroad.

This followed a recent tightening of public health restrictions on travel, including requiring travelers to Canada to quarantine in hotels at their own expense for up to three days under strict supervision while they await the results of mandatory PCR testing for the coronavirus.

As of Tuesday, Canada reported 810,000 cases of COVID-19 illnesses and almost 21,000 deaths.

Local airlines have asked the government for a bailout, but Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has insisted travelers must be reimbursed for cancelled trips and all flights within Canada—the second largest nation in the world by geography—be maintained.

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